

There is a Redeemer

Ruth 3

An ad was printed in a paper read: Single Blonde Female seeks male companionship, ethnicity not important, good-looking, I love to play, long walks in the woods, hunting, camping, fishing, riding in your pick-up truck, cozy winter nights by the fire, a candlelight dinner will have me eating out of your hands, rub me the right way and watch me respond, I'll be at the front door when you get home from work wearing only what nature gave me, kiss me and I am yours, call 404-875-6420, and ask for Daisy. 15,000 men called at talked to the Atlanta Humane Society about a yellow Labrador retriever named Daisy.

Today we come to Ruth 3. What we see in chapter three, much like our ad for our yellow lab, is charged with suggestive overtones that could be the recipe for love or for disaster. Let's take a quick review of what has led us to this point...

Chapter 1: Naomi and her husband and sons move from Bethlehem to Moab because of a famine in the land. Yet Naomi's husband dies. Her sons marry Moabite women, they too die. Naomi sets out to go back to Bethlehem, and one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth commits herself to the Lord and resolutely comes with her. the chapter ends with Naomi overwhelmed with her losses: "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."

Our lesson from chapter 1 was: We have to come to the end of ourselves, to find the beginning of God.

Chapter 2: Once back in Bethlehem, Ruth begins to glean grain to sustain them. It turns out that she gleans in the field of a man named Boaz, a man of standing, a man of God, and a relative of Naomi's husband. And we see Naomi recover from her long night of despondency as she exults in God (2:20): "The Lord's kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Chapter two overflows with hope.

Our lesson from chapter 2 was: We are invited to come and find grace the wings of God.

According to 2:23, Ruth continued to glean in Boaz' field through both the barley and wheat harvests. During these couple of months, Boaz and Ruth most likely saw each in the field quite often.

And this brings us to chapter 3...

Scene 1: Naomi's Hopeful Plan (vv. 1-5)

But the relationship wasn't pursuing any further... So Naomi makes a hopeful and somewhat bold suggestion to Ruth:

- 1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"**
- 2 Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.**
- 3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.**

4 Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do."

5 And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

Naomi has a plan. She says to Ruth, "...**shall I not seek security for you ...**" The word "security" means a "settled spot" or "a place of rest." Naomi wanted Ruth to be settled and secure in a home with a husband. The sheer fact that Naomi has a strategy teaches us something. People who feel like victims don't make plans. When Naomi awakens in 2:20 to the kindness of God, her hope comes alive and she makes a plan.

So Naomi suggests Boaz to Ruth – after all, he is a kinsman... Therefore he is the likely candidate for being Ruth's husband. That way the family name and family inheritance will be preserved, according to Hebrew custom. So Naomi's aim is clear: to win for Ruth a godly husband and a secure future, and preserve the family line.

So Naomi instructs Ruth to fix herself up all beautiful and irresistible and go down to the threshing floor where he will be working tonight. A threshing floor was usually located on top of a hill to catch any wind that was blowing. Threshing separated the heads of grain from the chaff. When the wind died down, they held a great religious feast. After the feast was over, the men would sleep around the grain to protect it from thieves.

Naomi instructs Ruth to go to the threshing floor of Boaz, and after he has lain down for the evening, sneak in, lift up his cloak and lie down at his feet. Everybody, including Ruth, must be thinking, "And just where do you suppose that will lead?" To which Naomi gives the extraordinary answer in verse 4, "**he will tell you what you should do.**"

It's clear that this is Naomi's way of trying to get Boaz to marry Ruth. It is not clear why she should go about it like this. Why not a conversation with Boaz instead of this highly suggestive and risky midnight maneuver? What would Boaz tell her to do? Will this scheme lead to an illicit night of passion, or a stunning scene of purity, integrity and self-control?

Scene 2: The Night at the Threshing Floor (vv. 6-13)

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.

7 And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

9 And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

She says, "Take your maidservant under your wing" or "Spread your skirt over me." Now whether Boaz takes this to be an offer of outright sexual relations or something more subtle and profound will depend on his character and his appraisal of Ruth's character.

Do you remember what Boaz prayed for Ruth back in chapter 2? **"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."** (Ruth 2:12).

Ruth uses that same phrase to Boaz in verse 9, **"Take your maidservant under your wing."** Ruth has recognized that Boaz is God's wing of protection for her. God will use Boaz to answer his own prayer. Basically, Ruth said to Boaz, "spread your wings over me, as a husband would do for his wife. I want you to marry me..."

Ruth tells Boaz that he is a kinsman-redeemer, the one who can redeem our inheritance and our family name from being lost. How will Boaz respond?

10 Then he said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

13 Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you--good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning."

Boaz is absolutely overjoyed! (vv. 10-11). She didn't go after younger and wealthier men, but willingly chose an older Boaz. (v. 10). Boaz remarks of Ruth's excellent moral character in v. 11. It is the same Hebrew word the author used of Boaz in 2:1 where he is called "a man of great wealth". They were a perfect match!

Boaz had apparently been hoping for Ruth to respond to his kindness because he had done his homework in advance. He was aware of another relative of Ruth's who was in closer relation than he was. He would have to settle the issue the right way – He was going to give the other man the opportunity to redeem Ruth before himself. Boaz wanted to do it the right way, and trust God for outcome (vv. 12-13).

Do you get the picture here? The stars are beautiful overhead, it is midnight, he loves her, she loves him, they are alone, she is under his cloak ... and he does not touch her for the sake of righteousness.

Listen, the mood of American life today is that my freedom to express myself sexually is the greatest good and any guilt-producing, puritanical principles of chastity and faithfulness are not only old-fashioned but intolerant.

But listen young lovers, if the stars are shining in their beauty and your blood is thudding like a hammer and you both want each other, stop ... for the sake of righteousness. Let the morning dawn on your purity. Don't be like the world. Be like Boaz. Be like Ruth. Profoundly in love. Powerful in self-control. Committed to righteousness. And God will bless you for it.

Scene 3: The Next Morning (vv. 14-18)

Boaz didn't want anyone to know that Ruth had been to the threshing floor. Nothing had happened that was improper but gossipers are not careful about facts. Look at verse 14:

- 14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."**
- 15 Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.**
- 16 So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her.**
- 17 And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.' "**
- 18 Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."**

Boaz gives Ruth six measures of grain for the road. We don't know how much this is, but apparently it is quite a bit. He didn't want Ruth to go home empty-handed to her ambitious and spiritually-sensitive mother-in-law. Lord knows he was certainly grateful for her good advice! (v. 15). Lastly, Naomi encourages Ruth to wait patiently for Boaz to work things out. She felt confident that he wouldn't rest until the matter was settled (v. 18).

Two quick lessons we from this chapter...

1. When God inspires hope, we must act.

God's grace and kindness gave Naomi hope, and she acted on it. When God puts hope in your heart, we must take action. Have you ever had a God-given hope placed in your heart... but you didn't act on it?

"The more a man feels without acting, the less he'll be able to act. And in the long run, the less he'll be able to feel." - C.S. Lewis

I pray that this story of Ruth will help us as a church to "hope in God" (Ps. 42:5) even in these dark times in which we live. Churches that feel no hope just try to survive, going the motions year in and year out. Only hopeful churches plan and strategize. Hopeful churches don't just survive, they thrive. Hope in God causes us to pray and plan and act to see God powerfully at work in His church.

It's for God's people time to hope again... to dream again... to pray again... to plan again... to act again.

2. We must claim our Redeemer. (v. 9)

Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer to Ruth is a beautiful illustration of how Jesus Christ is our kinsman-redeemer.

Jesus Christ fulfills all of the requirements to be our kinsman-redeemer.

A. Jesus was related to us by blood:

Hebrews 2:14 - **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death...**

B. Jesus was able to pay the price

1 Pet 1:18-19 - **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**

C. Jesus was willing to redeem

Mark 10:45 - **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**

Jesus meets all the qualifications to be your kinsman-redeemer. He paid the price of your redemption in full at the cross, but like Ruth at the feet of Boaz, you come to the feet of Jesus and ask Him to be your own redeemer.

There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son;
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

Jesus, my Redeemer, name above all names;
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Hope for sinners slain.

When I stand in Glory, I will see His face,
There I'll serve my King forever In that holy place...

Is Jesus your Redeemer today?